

Form 10-300  
(July 1969)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION**

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

Post-it® Fax Note

7671

Date	6/15	# of pages	4
To	Susan Lankford		
From	Amy Walker		
Co./Dept.	Co.		
Phone #	Phone #		
Fax #	205/213-3545		

<b>1. NAME</b>			
COMMON: THE CULBERTSON MANSION			
AND/OR HISTORIC: SAME			
<b>2. LOCATION</b>			
STREET AND NUMBER: 914 EAST MAIN STREET			
CITY OR TOWN: NEW ALBANY			
STATE INDIANA	CODE 18	COUNTY: FLOYD	CODE 43
<b>3. CLASSIFICATION</b>			
CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Structure <input type="checkbox"/> Object	<input type="checkbox"/> Public <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress	Yes: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input type="checkbox"/> No
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input type="checkbox"/> Educational <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Government <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial <input type="checkbox"/> Military <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Park <input type="checkbox"/> Private Residence <input type="checkbox"/> Religious <input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) _____ _____ _____
<b>4. OWNER OF PROPERTY</b>			
OWNER'S NAME: HISTORIC NEW ALBANY, INCORPORATED			
STREET AND NUMBER: P. O. BOX 69			
CITY OR TOWN: NEW ALBANY	STATE: INDIANA	CODE 18	
<b>5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION</b>			
COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC: Office of the Recorder			
STREET AND NUMBER: City-County Building			
CITY OR TOWN: New Albany	STATE Indiana	CODE 18	
<b>6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS</b>			
TITLE OF SURVEY: FALLS OF THE OHIO METROPOLITAN COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS METROPOLITAN PRESERVATION PLAN			
DATE OF SURVEY: 1973 <input type="checkbox"/> Federal <input type="checkbox"/> State <input type="checkbox"/> County <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Local			
DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS: KENTUCKIANA REGIONAL PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT AGENCY			
STREET AND NUMBER: 208 SOUTH FIFTH STREET			
CITY OR TOWN: KENTUCKIANA	STATE: KENTUCKIANA	CODE 02	

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

STATE:

COUNTY:

ENTRY NUMBER

FOR NPS USE ONLY

# 7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	<input type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	<input type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The 26-room Culbertson Mansion is located on a large corner site which originally sloped uninterrupted down to the Ohio River.

Its basic dimensions are sixty feet by seventy feet with central entrance foyer leading into a large hall with an eighteen foot filigree-edged ceiling containing a magnificent three-story staircase with finely carved mahogany and rosewood newel and rails is cantilevered from the walls. Its multiple castiron piazzas, which like the cresting on bays and roof lighten the solid masses of the walls, provided access to the views on all sides. Although the layout of the house is basically symmetrical, the diversity of interior spaces is reflected on the exterior in a bold combination of circular and rectangular features, climaxed by the great curved bay that rises over the ball room and marks the projecting corner of the structure. Its form is echoed in smaller bays, the delicate rhythm of the arcaded parlor porch, the smoothly arched window frames, the serpentine limestone walk approaching the richly embellished entrance, the lush brackets of the cornice, and even the hoods of the chimneys. In spite of the picturesquely irregular massing, the effect of the whole is unified by consistency of scale and detail, and by the castiron balustrade that ties together the broken skyline. The concave slope of the Mansard roof is counter-balanced by the still-surviving scalloped slates. The overall effect is highly Baroque without the lack of discipline that so often characterizes provincial manifestations of the Second Empire style.

The interior is equally impressive. A vestibule lined with Minton tile leads directly into the long, narrow central hall that sweeps upward in the twisted staircase at the far end. The hall is flanked to the right by the parlor with its curved bay and ample dining room, and to the left by the ballroom (perhaps originally used also as the formal parlor). This magnificent room, with its twin marble mantelpieces and a transverse bay breaking its length, retains the original painted ceiling, framed in filigreed plaster moldings. The ceiling's potpourri of Pompeii-inspired arabesques, cupids' heads, and naturalistic floral elements is spectacular even for the period. Along with the chandelier medallions, gilt pier-glasses, and window-cornices, it is remarkably well-preserved.

Beyond the climactic ballroom lies a library probably added and certainly decorated at a later period (like certain features of the other rooms, such as the dining-room overmantel), perhaps for the wedding of a Culbertson daughter in 1883. Fine incised and inlaid woodwork and angular Eastlake-inspired details mark this phase. The many and spatially varied upstairs chambers are suitably generous in scale and ornamentation. The sturdy structure of 13-inch-thick brick walls is revealed in the massive foundations and supporting partitions of the basement, which is used for display of kitchen and other domestic implements. Throughout the house, with its hardwood parquet floors and even its quarter-inch-thick layer of characteristic New Albany plate glass laid over the watertable to prevent the rise of moisture through the walls, the craftsmanship is of a high order. The house has been restored to much of its original grandeur appropriately furnished, and well maintained by Historic New Albany, Inc.

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## 8. SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

☐ Pre-Columbian

☐ 16th Century

☐ 18th Century

☐ 20th Century

☐ 15th Century

☐ 17th Century

☒ 19th Century

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known)

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

☐ Aboriginal

☐ Education

☐ Political

☐ Urban Planning

☐ Prehistoric

☐ Engineering

☐ Religion/Phi-

☐ Other (Specify)

☐ Historic

☐ Industry

☐ Philosophy

☐ Agriculture

☐ Invention

☐ Science

☒ Architecture

☐ Landscape

☐ Sculpture

☐ Art

☐ Architecture

☐ Social/Human-

☒ Commerce

☐ Literature

☐ itarian

☐ Communications

☐ Military

☐ Theater

☐ Conservation

☐ Music

☐ Transportation

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The W. S. Culbertson Mansion was built as the palatial home of one of the leading industrialists, financiers, and philanthropists (or "capitalists," as they were called at the time) of New Albany, which a decade before had been the largest city in Indiana. The Culbertson fortune was established when the price of cotton goods sky-rocketed during the War between the States. W. S. Culbertson and John Culbertson bought fifty carloads of cotton goods for shipment to England. Arrival in New York found few ships going out to sea due to Confederate cruisers and all warehouses overflowing. During its return to New Albany cotton goods became a very scarce article. Cotton was not grown in the south, for all the men were out fighting, and in the north most of the mills had stopped. The wheel of fortune took a turn and rolled its little balls into the right holes and the price of cotton goods went up amazingly while the fifty carloads were on their way home to New Albany. The mansion reflects the opulence of an era which still felt the effects of the "Golden Fifties" yet strove to keep up with the latest innovations in fashion. Built just after the Civil War, in 1868, at a reputed cost of \$120,000, for drygoods magnate Culbertson, the house provides the climax in size, elaboration, and stylishness to the impressive series of 19th-century quasi-suburban villas that survives on New Albany's Main Street, many of them recently improved and restored. Although attributed to a local carpenter-architect named Banes, the design is of great sophistication in siting, massing, plan, interior spatial relationships, and distribution of ornament which, though lavish in detail, is relatively restrained in placement. The building is in its own right a superb example of the French Second Empire manner as adapted for residential architecture in the United States, and an indication of the rapidity of diffusion of Continental and East Coast fashions in the Middle West. In its present form the Culbertson Mansion is an unsurpassed representation of the splendor of the Ohio river towns in their heyday, and of the "Gilded Age" during the first wave of post-Civil War prosperity.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

# 9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Wilbur D. Peat, Indiana Houses of the Nineteenth Century  
(Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1962), p. 131, Plate 154.  
Walter E. Langsam, Preservation: Metropolitan Preservation Plan  
Louisville, Kentucky: Falls of the Ohio Metropolitan Council of  
Governments, 1973), p. 37.

# 10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			OR	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES		
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE		LATITUDE	LONGITUDE	
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds		Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds
NW	0 ' "	0 ' "		N 38 ° 17 ' 11 "	W 85 ° 48 ' 45 "	
NE	0 ' "	0 ' "				
SE	0 ' "	0 ' "				
SW	0 ' "	0 ' "				

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: 0.961

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE

# 11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE:  
RICHARD K. STEM, PRES.

ORGANIZATION: HISTORIC NEW ALBANY, INCORPORATED

DATE: June 3, 1974

STREET AND NUMBER:  
P. O. BOX 69

CITY OR TOWN: NEW ALBANY

STATE: INDIANA 47150

CODE: 18

# 12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION

As the designated State Liaison Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National ☐ State ☒ Local ☐

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Title \_\_\_\_\_

# NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date \_\_\_\_\_

ATTEST:

Keeper of The National Register

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